GOD's Providence the Support of Government.

A SERMON

Preach'd at

MAIDSTONE in *KENT.*

At the Assizes held there *September* 10. 1706. before the Lord Chief Justice *Holt*, and Mr. Justice *Gould.*

Published at the Request of *Snelling Thomas*, Esq; High Sheriff of the said County. And by the Order, and at the Desire of the Gentlemen of the Grand Jury.

By *Jonathan Bernard*, M. A. Vicar of *Ospringe* in *Kent.*

LONDON,
Printed for *Robert Willson*, in *Maidstone* in *Kent*, and *Richard Wellington* at the *Dolphin* in St. *Paul*'s Churchyard, and Sold by *B. Bragg* at the *Black Raven* in *Pater-Noster-Row.*

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Publish'd at the Request of Sir Thomas Taylor, Bart. Sir Stephen Langley, Knt. and by the Grand Jury.

By Josiah Bernard, M. A. Vicar of Olpridge in Kent.

Printed for Benj. Bragg at the Black Raven in Paternoster-Row, and Sold by B. Bragg at the Golden Key over against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet-street. 1705.

The Order of the Grand Jury.

Kent. ſſ. S. Thomas.

FOR the Edifying and Seaſonable Diſcourſe of the Reverend Mr. Bernard, *delivered in a Sermon before the Right Honourable the Lord Chief Juſtice* Holt, *and Mr. Juſtice* Gould, *at the Aſſizes holden at* Maidſtone, *on* Tueſday, September, 10. 1706.

WE the Gentlemen of the Grand Inqueſt, for the ſaid County, do return him my Thanks, and deſire that he would be pleaſed to Print the ſame for the Benefit of the Publick.

Thomas Palmer	Marriot Pett
Edward King	Thomas Daeth, Jun.
Hum. Style	George Charlton
Thomas Scot	John Ball
John Amhurſt	Felix Kadwell
Thomas Osborne	William Simons
Stephen Laſhington	Luke Spencer
Daniel White	Stephen Stringer.

To

To the Right Honourable **Lewis,**
***Lord* Rockingham,** *Lord Lieutenant of the County of* **Kent.**

To the Honourable **Snelling Thomas,** *Esq;*
High Sheriff of the County of **Kent.**

To the Honourable Sir **Thomas Palmer,**
Baronet.

Edward King, Esq;
Humphry Stile, Esq;
Thomas Scot, Esq;
John Amhurst, Esq;
Thomas Osborne, Esq;
Stephen Lashington, Esq;
Daniel White, Esq;
Thomas Daeth, Jun. Esq;
George Charlton, Esq;
John Ball, Esq;
Felix Kadwell, Esq;
William Simons, Esq;
Luke Spencer, Esq;
Stephen Stringer, Esq;
Marriot Pett, Esq;

This Sermon is most Humbly Dedicated,

By their most Humble,

and most Obedient Servant,

Jonathan Bernard.

An ASSIZE SERMON.

Preached at

Maidſtone in *KENT.*

Pſalm CXXVII. 1.

Except the Lord build the Houſe, they labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the City, the watchman waketh but in vain.

AS every ſenſible Man muſt needs be deſirous of the publick Welfare; ſo I am full of hopes that every underſtanding Perſon, that is truly a Friend to our Church and State, is exceeding eaſy under, and abundantly ſatisfi'd with our preſent happy Circumſtances.

The great Felicities we enjoy at home, by the wiſe Adminiſtration of our moſt *Gracious Queen*; and the many *Victories* we have gain'd Abroad by the *Matchleſs* Conduct *of our General*, and the Invincible *Courage of our Armies*, *are Things* ſo real, and ſo ſenſible, and ſo very neceſſary for the ſafety

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of us, and all our *Allies*, that he must be wilfully *blind*, who does not acknowlege that some more than *ordinary Cause*, must needs have concurr'd to bring about our present Prosperity.

A *Natural* man and a Philosopher, will be apt to ascribe all the Welfare of Bodies Politick to *second causes*, and *humane means*, and in such happy *Events*, point us to the more than ordinary *Prudence* of Governours, the *Sagacity* and vigilance of States-men, the Secresy and *Steadiness* of Counsels, the Nobleness and *Bravery* of Commanders, with the Zeal and *Fidelity* of all Ranks of men employ'd by the Publick: And that, by these *wheels* only, the *Common-wealth* can move right, and that to these *Instruments* only is owable the Welfare of *Kingdoms* and *States*.

But a *Religious Man* and a good Christian will carry this point *further*; and tho he is ever ready to give to all parties concern'd their *due honour* and Praise, and to acknowlege that *generally speaking* God does work now by humane and ordinary Mean's;

Yet he ever acknowleges that even *these means* fall or take place according to the allowance and *Direction* of God's Providence.

Whil'st therefore the Men of the World lay their Fingers rightly upon the immediate visible *Causes, and Instruments* of publick prosperity;

Whil'st they *search no further*, than into the external *Occasions* by which good fortune is deriv'd to them, and so take no Notice of the first and *Principal Cause* of all things, Namely *God* Almighty and his *Providence* that *Influences* all humane Affairs;

These men have really forgot the *main thing*, inasmuch as they *Build* all upon the *Wisdom* of man, and the *Power* of *second Causes*, exclusive to the *Power* and *Providence* of God.

Such indeed are the *Narrow thoughts* and short Sentiments of profane Politicians, who will not see the *necessity* of a Divine

vine Providence from above, to Direct and Influence the Counsels and Actions of the World below.

What therefore the dim sight of humane Reason could not, or which may be fear'd, would not see, and what some Politicians of Old, and of late too, think *needless* for the *Foundation* and *Support* of Government;

That all Wise and good Men in every Age of the World have constantly *Asserted, viz.* That all *second Causes* are *overruld* by a superior Agent; That a Divine *Providence* is *necessary* for the being and well-being of a Kingdom; That all the *Counsels of* Men are in *the hands* of God; That *he supports* Mankind not only in their *essence*, as Men, but in their *Contrivances* as Rational Men; That tis God who is the great *Parent* of Order, the *Patron* of Kingdoms and *Protector* of States; That Men only are *Instruments* in respect of God which he *makes use of* at Pleasure. And tho they have *Freewill* in their Actions, and seem to *move* at their own *Discretions*; Yet without offering a direct Violence to their native Liberties God does by *secret* and unknown ways oblige them to *serve the great ends* of his Wisdom, and Providence:

In a Word, if God's Blessing be wanting to Mankind in their *Private* Capacites their Labours are all Fruitless; but especially if a more than ordinary Providence did not watch over *publick Societies*, all would decline to ruin and confusion; or as the Psalmist well expresses it, *Except the Lord build the House, they labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain.*

In Discoursing upon which Words, I shall

1. Give some *account* of the Phrases.

2. And then draw out some proper *Conclusions.*

1. As to an account or Interpretation of the Phrases:

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The First of them is, *Except the Lord build the House*, &c. By which may safely be understood thus much.

Whether we consider Mankind in their bodily Labours or Cares and Designs for their Families; Or in their Zeal for Posterity to raise up, or preserve their Houses from being extinguish'd, or reflect on what they do in their private Capacities;

Tis a most *certain Truth*, that unless God Almighty Favour them with his *Blessing*; Their Labours will prove unsuccessful; Their Cares disquieting; Their Zeal Disappointed; Their Hopes frustrated; And all their Contrivances and Attempts in Vain.

The Second Phrase is. *Except the Lord keep the City*, the Watchman waketh but in vain.

By the *Watchman* here, we may well understand, *Kings and Queens*, *Princes*, Governours, Magistrates, and all kind of *Political Rulers* whatsoever: And under the word *City* may be Comprehended, the Publick State and Government, whether *Civil* or *Ecclesiastical*.

As to the *Civil* Government, the sense will then be; Unless God *Inspire* the Supreme Magistrate with such a *Measure of his Grace* as is Suitable to that high Station he is call'd to, which is *Piously Credible* he does;

Unless God *Inspire* all the *Servants* of the Government, to *discharge* their *Ministry*, with Zeal and Honour, Fidelity and Wisdom, and with a *peculiar* regard to the Publick Good;

Unless God *put it into the* Hearts of those concern'd, to Execute Justice with *Courage* and *Wisdom*, and with *Mercy* also and *Compassion*, where needful;

Unless God, who is a God of *Order*, and a *Friend* and *Patron* to Publick Societies, *inspire* Mankind with *Meekness* and *Sobriety*, and make them Humble and Obedient in their Stations;

It were Morally *Impossible* for mere Man, tho' never so Wise and Diligent to *restrain* the Multitude within Bounds, and keep them from offering *Violence* to each other.

Again:

Again: So long as Government is in the Hands of fallible Men, which *ever* was, and *muſt* be, whilſt Men are but Men;

There would be *much more Miſcarriage* in Publick Affairs; unleſs we ſuppoſe *a Divine Power* Influencing the Counſels of Princes; and that God who is a Lover of Men, and hath *inſtituted Government for the good of the World*, do furniſh them with ſufficient Wiſdom, to Anſwer the *GREAT*, and which is much more, *the GOOD ends* of that Power he has Committed to them, and ſo enable them to Judge their People *Righteouſly*. *Pſal.* 67. 4.

As to the *Eccleſiaſtical* Government, if we take the Word City for a *Religious* Society, the *City of God his Church*, then we muſt acknowlege;

That Unleſs *God do ſupport his Servants* in the Church, for the carrying on *his Work*, and aſſiſt them in the Maintenance *of his Cauſe*, amidſt all the *Evils* and *Infirmities* which attend Humane Frailty;

Unleſs he kindly diſpoſe *the Hearts* of Men to receive their *Meſſage* gladly, and *Comply* with their Invitations; Unleſs he *enclines* Men to Embrace Religion in their Practice, and reconcile them to a Love of the Ways of Piety;

It is impoſſible his *Miniſters* ſhould be ſucceſsful in their *Callings*, or *Inſtruments* to reclaim Men from Sin.

Their moſt Powerful *Reaſons*, and moſt Pathetick *Diſcourſes*; nay, even their unanſwerable *Arguments* will be vainly *thrown* away upon Mankind.

For there goes more *to Perſwaſion*, or Conviction than *Reaſon*, and Argument, and Demonſtration, and that is not in their Power. *So that* Paul *may Plant*, Apollos *may Water*, *but God muſt give the Increaſe*. 1 Cor. 3: 6.

Again, Unleſs God *lend his helping hand* towards the Support of the Church Militant, amidſt all the Clouds and Storms, the Waves and Floods that *beat upon her*;

Unleſs

Unless God *defend* her from such Dangers as her *Inteſtine Diviſions* may Create, and inſpire the Hearts of all her Servants, (whoſe Office it is to be *the Meſſengers of Peace*,) with the *Spirit of Peace and Love*, the Spirit of Moderation and true Chriſtian *Charity* towards their Fellow Members Firſt, and to all other Modeſt and Peaceable Chriſtians, ſo far as is *Conſiſtent* with their *Duty* to God, and *Obligations* to the Church it ſelf;

Finally: Until ſome end ſhall be put by God to our many *Controverſies* and *Diſputes*, which have eaten ſo much out, *the life and practice of* Chriſtianity, and until all that call themſelves *Chriſtians and Churchmen*, ſhall lay aſide their mutual *Animoſities*, and ſtrive only together to adorn their common Chriſtianity by a truly Chriſtian Life;

In a Word; until thoſe *violent* Calentures, and Paroxyſms of the Spirits of Men; thoſe *Heart-Burnings* and *Contentions*, that *Uncharitableneſs* and *Ill Opinion* of all *different* Parties, ſhall be in ſome Meaſure *Allay'd* or *Compos'd*; And in the Room thereof there be rais'd up in the Hearts of Chriſtians, a Spirit *of Meekneſs and mutual Forbearance*, of *Gentleneſs*, and *Moderation*;

It muſt needs be that our Common Chriſtianity will ſuffer by our unreaſonable Contentions, as well as this our Church it ſelf does now ſuffer thereby.

Arch. Bp. Tillotſon's Preface to Wilkin's Sermons.

And ſurely *Moderation* (*as a great Man* well expreſſes it,) which has been ſo much eſteem'd and magnify'd by *wiſe Men* in all Ages, *is ſtill a virtue*, and one of the *peculiar Ornaments* and Advantages of the Excellent Conſtitution of our Church, and muſt at laſt be the *Temper* of her Members, eſpecially the Clergy, if ever we intend the *firm eſtabliſhment* of our Church, and do not *Induſtriouſly* deſign by cheriſhing *inteſtine Diviſions* and heats among our ſelves to let in *Popery* at theſe Breaches.

Pſalm 80. 15.

So that unleſs God make an hedge about this *Vineyard which his right Hand has Planted*, and by his ſpecial Providence ſecure her from the Rage of her Enemies from without,

out, and defend her from all inconviences which the Folly and Peevishness of her Friends within may bring upon Her;

Without this singular protection of the Divine Providence the Christian Church would either *be devour'd* by the Sons of Violence; or *be dashed to Pieces* by the Plague of Her own Divisions and Animosities.

But Her Comfort is, The great and good God is her Protector, and so the *Gates of Hell shall not prevail* against her, Matt. 16. 18. And *Lo! I am with you always, even* unto the end of the World, saith our Saviour. 28. 20.

And now by the account which I have given of the Words of my Text you will easily judge what will be the *main Design* of my Discourse, and which I shall put in this method.

1. It is most fit and just that Mankind should believe that God's Providence presides over, and influences all the Affairs of this World.

2. The Divine Providence is eminently visible in his Love to Mankind, preserving Humane Societies and the Protection of Churches and States.

3. And when these are spoke to, I shall then shew what use a good man may make hereof for his Comfort and Security.

1. It is most fit and just that Mankind should believe that God's Providence presides over, and influences all the Affairs of this World. Prop. 1.

Providence is that *continual Care* which God exercises over all his Creatures, which once made *he sustains* and *governs*, and *powerfully disposes* to wise and excellent Purposes.

Providence is that *watchful Charity* of God which daily *overlooks* the World and all therein, *preserving* them in their *beings*, and making them *serviceable* to such Measures as he directs.

Providence

Providence is a *constant effect of* the never ceasing Goodness of God, which as it once enclin'd him to *make* the World, so will not let him *abandon* it afterwards, but support all things in *their Essences and Operations.* In a Word. Providence is that *Power whereby God presides* over *ANGELS* and *MEN*, and the whole Creation, maintaining all things in *their being* and *well-being*, and causing them to be *Subservient* to his Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, in the Government of the World.

Now to prove *there* is such a Providence, I offer, to your Considerations these following *Arguments.*

Arg. 1. 1. I appeal to the *admirable frame* of Nature and the wonderful contrivance of all things at First, together with that *order and Harmony* they *continue in* to this Day.

The great Elegancy and Harmony and Order of all things do sufficiently Evince that they are the WORK of a God who made all things in *Weight and Measure*, and the *Preservation of all* things in the same most excellent order does also abundantly prove a Providence.

Witness the constant Successions of Night and Day, Winter and Summer, the growth of Plants and the Generations of Animals according to their several kinds with the Law of Natural Instinct, whereby every thing is *enclin'd to*, and *enabled for* its own Preservation.

With what *an orderly* Providence does God Cause the several Seasons and all the Elements to minister Joy and Comfort to Mankind?

Our Common Mother the EARTH could not after so many Labours appear *Fruitful* and Beautiful as in her *greener Years*, did not God continually *renew the Face of the Earth.*

above The *binding of the Waters* about, and the Suspension of the Clouds that they distill in such soft and gentle Rains as usually, touches so near upon a Miracle, that 'tis *uncapable* of any good Solution without having *recourse* to the Power and Providence of God.

Is

Is it not a mighty *wonder* that the Powers of Nature are ſo regularly *reſtrained* within due bounds that they *claſh* not againſt each other? That all the *Hoſt of Heaven* ſhould march every one in their way, and not *break their* Ranks? That the Sun *deſcends not* too near to burn us up, nor the Water of the Sea *break forth* to drown us?

It exceeds all wonder, ſays *a good Philoſopher*, that there ſhould be any one Day wherein all the things in the world ſo pregnant with Fiery Principles do not break forth into one *mighty flame*, and lay the whole *Creation in Aſhes*. Or that the *Earth* ſhould be delivered of her many Vapours *and winds* within its Bowels, without the Pangs and Throws, and *Convulſions* of an *Earth-Quake*. What ſhall *we aſcribe* all this to, but the reſtraining Power of God, by whoſe Providence the ſeveral parts live in *ſo good a Correſpondence*, and do *not juſtle* and deſtroy each other? *Pin. Nat. Hiſt. lib. 2. c. 107.*

2. From the Nature *and Attributes* of God we may juſtly conclude there is a Providence; and it is enough only to ſay, *that becauſe God made the World*, he will therefore *take care* of it; There being nothing more *agreeable* to his Wiſdom than to *take care* of his own Workmanſhip. *Arg. 2.*

It is not conceivable that a Wiſe Being ſhould be wholly *unconcern'd* for that Work wherein he hath ſhown ſo *great Art and Skill in* the Contrivance.

The whole Creation does *abſolutely need a* Divine Influence, without which all would be in *diſorder*, if not *return to their firſt nothing* again.

And as it were *unnatural for a Mother* to expoſe a Poor helpleſs Infant; (for *can a Mother forget* her Sucking Child, that *She ſhould not have Compaſſion on the Son of her* Womb?) So there can be no Colour of Reaſon to imagine that a *Iſa. 49. 15.*

good God should make a World, and then ſtand by *unconcerned*, or caſt it off, and *leave all to* Chance or Fate.

Nay, rather let us ſuppoſe, that ſince God was ſo well pleaſed in this Work, that upon the Review he Pro-
Gen. 1. 31. nounced, that it *was all good and worthy* of himſelf, he will *therefore continue his* Care of it, and never let it want his providential Influence.

For as the Works of the Creation do ſhew moſt fully an infinite Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs in the Author of them, ſo there is nothing more *unreaſonable* than to conceive, That ſuch an infinitely perfect Being, either *cannot*, or *will not* take due care of it afterward.

To ſay that God *cannot*, is againſt the natural Notion of a God, and is plainly contradicted by what he has done already; and to ſay *he will not*, is a moſt baſe and unworthy *Reflection* on his Goodneſs, Wiſdom, and all his *Attributes*.

Shall we then entertain ſuch unkind Thoughts of God, as to think he has *abandon'd* all his Creatures to Fortune or Deſtiny? Or do we conceive that too *much buſineſs* would ſpoil his Happineſs and Felicity?

No ſurely. So excellent a Nature as God's, is no ways liable to *be tyr'd* and weary; and *infinite Wiſdom* and *Power* can never be *burthen'd* with the management of a *Million* of Worlds.

Arg. 3. 3. The univerſal conſent of Mankind gives Teſtimony to this Truth.

For this Cauſe, in all their ſtraits and diſtreſſes, Men have *directed their Prayers* to God, as perſwaded that his Wiſdom and Power has the *greateſt ſhare* in the Government of the World, and in hopes that his Goodneſs will providentially give them that *help* they pray for.

Upon

Upon this Principle, all *Nations* have, in cases of importance, *by Oath* made *their appeals* to God, and Sworn by his Name; And thereby not only owning themselves under the Influence of his Providence, but also obnoxious to his Justice, if they *Swear not in Judgment, Righteousness, and Truth.* Jer. 4. 2.

Take away Providence from the World, and you presently *evacuate* several other of God's Attributes; for his Goodness, Justice, Dominion over us, *signifie nothing* to Mankind, unless there be a wise and good Providence in *the application* of them.

The Greatness of the Divine Nature, and the Almighty Power of God, will have but *a cold and dull influence on mens Minds*, if we could suppose that God was *no ways* concerned for us.

It is therefore upon this belief of a Providence that all our *Prayers*, our *Thankfulness*, our *Obedience* does depend, and the denial thereof takes away all *grounds* of religious Worship.

He that can believe God *will do nothing* for him, has no *Encouragement* for *praying* to him; he that thinks God *never did* any thing for him, has no sufficient *Motive* to return his Tribute of *Thanks* and Praise.

He that believes God is an *indifferent Spectator of the World*, and unconcerned in the good or ill that does befall him, as every one must that denies a Providence, has no *Reason* to *love* or *fear* God, that is, to *obey* him.

But good men *do believe*, that God is willing and able to help them in their day of need, therefore *they pray him to interest* himself in their Affairs.

Good men are *abundantly sensible* of God's Blessings and Favours, therefore they set forth his Goodness, *and praise* him for his Mercies.

Ps. 58.11. Good men believe that God *regards* the Actions of Men; that he Commands, and will reward Virtue; that he forbids, and will punish Vice; therefore they chuse to obey him, and fear to offend him.

In this all Mankind are agreed, that the Divine Providence does *superintend* and take care of all things in this World; and not only continues them in *their Beings*, but disposeth of their *Operations* in such a wise Order as may be most suitable to *the Ends* for which they were *designed*.

To him wise and good Men make *returns of thanks* for the Mercies they enjoy; to him they pray to remove the Evils they groan under; and upon this common Persuasion, that *there is a Providence*, they have in all Ages paid their constant *Adoration to God*, and this not only by *Jews* and *Christians*, but by the very Heathens who had no *Advantage* from Revelation.

Arg. 4. 4. Predictions and Miracles are a sufficient Proof that God influenceth the World by his Providence.

That there have been certain and punctual *foretellings* of things long before they came to pass, has been the constant belief of all Nations, and he that denies it must give the Lie both to the *greatest*, and to the *best part* of all Mankind.

Miracles are also full *instances* of a Providence; for if ever a thing was *brought* to pass above the *capacity* of second Causes, then there is *an active Deity that exerts* his Power in that Case. Or if ever the Power of Nature was *Interrupted*, it must be by the Interposition of a *Superior* Cause.

For 'tis neither *Intelligible* that Nature should go out of *its course* its self, nor possible for her, when out of Course, *to recover* her self again into due order, without the

the *Interpoſition* and help of an Almighty Power. Therefore if ever there have been any *Predictions*, or *Miracles* in the World, of which *the Old and New Teſtaments* are ſufficient Evidence, then there is full proof that God *exerts* himſelf or his Providence in the World.

This laſt Argument I confeſs depends on that *eſteem* which men have for the holy Scriptures; but I ſuppoſe my ſelf to be *in an Auditory of Chriſtians*, and ſpeaking *to Perſons* that *are Friends to Revelation*, and ſo cannot doubt but this ſort of Arguing will have *its due weight* with you. That then there is a Providence, is the Language of *Nature*, the Voice of *Reaſon*, and the Judgment of all *Mankind*; and which is more,

5. It is the Voice of *God* himſelf; for thus ſaith the Scripture, Arg. 5.

The Eyes of all things wait upon thee, O Lord, and thou giveſt them their Meat in due Seaſon. Pſal. 145. 15.

He gives to *the Beaſt his* Food, and *to the young Ravens which* cry unto him; He covereth the *Heavens with Clouds*, and prepareth *Rain for the* Earth; he *maketh the Graſs* to grow upon the Mountains, and Herbs for the uſe of Man. He *feeds the Fowls of* the Air, and *cloaths the Lillies of the Valleys*, and the very *Sparrows fall not to the* Ground without his Knowledge and Permiſſion. 147. 8, 9. Matth. 6. 26. &c. 10. 29.

We learn from Scripture, that the *Sun* and the *Stars* are under the Direction of Providence; and that the *Air*, the *Rain*, and the *Winds*, are under the ſame Government, and that he ſends *his former and his later Rain to water the Earth*, and make it Fruitful and capable to produce all things neceſſary for Man and Beaſts, *Job* 5. 10. *Deut.* 11. 14. Pſal. 147. 4.

And more particularly as to Man himſelf, 'tis ſaid that he gives *life and breath*; *that in him we live, move, and have our Beings*; that he gives us *fruitful Seaſons*, filling Acts 17. 25, 28. 14. 17.

filling our Hearts *with food and gladneſs*, and that the *very hairs* of our Head are *numbered* by him, *Matth.* 10. 30.

But then if we go further, and examine what the Scripture ſays of God's Providence over good men, we ſhall find that God has not only by multitude of *Promiſes* given abundant aſſurance of his Providential Care of them, but alſo given us the brighteſt and moſt illuſtrious *Examples* of his Kindneſs and Charity both to their Bodies and Souls.

And this brings me to my ſecond Propoſition, *viz.*

Prop. 2. The Divine Providence is moſt eminently viſible in his *love to mankind*, *preſerving humane Societies*, and the *protection of Churches and States.*

Doubtleſs in the *Adminiſtration of humane Affairs* there is a moſt *viſible appearance* of a moſt gracious Providence.

Trace Man from his Cradle to his gray Hairs, and you will find him ſurrounded by Providence in all the Stages of Life.

His *Greener Years* is a State of Ignorance and Weakneſs; but here he directly *lives* upon the *Alms* of Providence, and is *Nurſt up* by the Care and Love of God. If he eſcapes the *Miſchiefs* of a Child, he paſſeth on to the raſh *Adventures* of Youth, and if Providence defend him from thoſe *Storms*, he is yet in the Road to more certain and *malicious* Calamities.

His whole Life lies *expoſed* to Chance and Miſfortune, and a flood of miſeries is ready to *break in upon* him from every Quarter, if a good Providence did not *interpoſe.*

Conſider then, 'twas God that *form'd* us in the Womb, and *brought us* into Light; that *nurs'd* us in our Infancy, and *Educated* us in our Childhood; that *govern'd* our Youth,

Youth, and *conducted* our Manhood through the various hazards of Life.

The Enjoyment of *our Health*, the *Means* of Livelihood, our *daily* Protection, and the continuance *of Life* it self; all these are *owable* to God, of whose Goodness we all partake, and whose Mercy is over all his Works.

But besides the many *Benefits* God pours upon Mankind in their *private* Capacities, God is a lover *of Order*, and a Friend to *Government*, by which he conveys *great good* to the World.

And indeed the very *Being of Magistracy and Civil Government* is a full Argument for *Providence*.

It being no *small wonder* that the *strong bands* of wicked and malicious Men should *stand in Awe* of Persons invested with *Authority* above them.

For if the *Multitude* knew and were resolv'd to make use of their own Strength, Government would soon fall in pieces: For take them *one by one*, they are *ignorant* and illiterate; *take them altogether*, they *are bloody* and violent: They know not how to *bear the Yoke* long, and are naturally desirous of change, so that when their Passions are blown up by some *popular Leader*, how easily would *they unhinge* the Government, and run us all into a State of Anarchy and *Confusion?*

So that it may *be truly* said, that notwithstanding all the *strength* that *Authority* hath to support it, it stands *much by the Reverence that* is paid to it, *but more by the Providence* of God.

Reflect a little on the great Numbers *of wicked* Men, and consider their Selfishness and Malice, their Zeal and Activity to do Mischief, their Falshood and Dissimulation, and their politick Closeness and reserved Cunning; and we may well stand *amazed* at the goodness of God, *who holds* them as it were *with a bridle*, and suffers them to do no more mischief in the World.

Their

Their Malice will prompt them to ſtrike at *our lives*, their ſelfiſhneſs and falſhood to forſwear Men out of their *Eſtates*, and they are readily diſpos'd to act whatſoever their *Paſſion* prompts them to.

It is not their *fears* of *Juſtice*, nor *the Terrors of the Law* alone that reſtrains them; for many of them are ſo bold and daring as *to deſpiſe Life* it ſelf.

Whence is it then that the *Rights* of all Men are not invaded, nor their *properties* confounded, and that the whole World is not made a *Shambles* of Blood, and an univerſal *Scene* of Slaughter?

Truly no fairer account can be given of this Matter, than that God is *the Upholder* of Government, and the *wicked* are thus powerfully *reſtrain'd* by the watchful *Charity* of the Divine Providence.

And as all Civiliz'd Nations owe the benefit of Government chiefly to God, ſo we the Subjects of this Kingdom ought gratefully to acknowledge, that our own moſt excellent Government, has been continued down, and preſerved to us in a wonderful manner by the moſt ſingular and diſtinguiſhing Providence.

A Government which *gives to our Princes the glorious Power of commanding free men, and to the Subject, the ſatisfaction of ſeeing the Power ſo lodg'd as that their Liberties are ſecure.*

The moſt *glorious Title* that a Crown'd Head can deſire to wear, is to be a *Father* or a *Mother* to their People; and to ſuch good Princes *a power* that enables them to cheriſh *and protect* is ſufficient, and I leave it to your ſelves to conſider whether it be deſirable that a *Ruining Power* ſhould be lodg'd any where.

This happy and *well temper'd Frame* of Government, I doubt not to ſay has been *preſerv'd* to us by *an uncommon Providence*; but how *thankful* we have been to God for the late *bleſſed Revolution*, and with what *Decency* ſome Perſons

Perſons treat the *Memory* of our late Glorious *Deliverer*, becomes not me to inquire into?

But ſure I am, as we are all Citizens of the World, we ought to be thankful to God for the Bleſſings of a Government, whatſoever it be, for any Government is better than none at all, but more eſpecially are we all *concern'd* in the Advantages of our own *well regulated Conſtitution*.

As therefore we are *Members* of this State, we are oblig'd *thankfully to adore* the Mighty *Upholder* of Kingdoms and *Protector* of States, to whom *we owe all* the Bleſſings of Civil Society, by whoſe gracious Diſpoſal, *Order* is Maintain'd, *Liberty* Preſerv'd, *Peace* Continued, and *Juſtice* to all our Satisfactions, as now adminiſtred at our own Doors.

As we are Members of a Church, we ought to be thankful, that by an eſpecial Providence her Intereſts are well *Secur'd*, and her *Foundations* ſafe, and like to continue ſo, if the want of *Charity* in ſome of her Members do not *weaken her Intereſt* at home, and *abroad* alſo:

As the Philoſopher well obſerves, *the ordinary* Appearances of Nature, tho' in themſelves moſt *wonderful*, are yet the leaſt *admired*, as the conſtant *riſing* of the Sun, the *Deſcent* of Fruitful Showers, *Recourſe* of Temperate Seaſons, and the like.

So with ſome Men, I fear, theſe Arguments for Providence, which I have taken from the *Being* of Government in general, and the *Well-being* of our own Government in particular, will be received with little or no *Reſpect*.

Suffer me therefore to carry your thoughts yet *farther*, and call upon you to conſider, whether our *Publick Affairs*, as they now ſtand, be not *attended* with a more than *ordinary* Bleſſing from God's Providence.

It is *well known*, next to God, *to whom we owe the* Happineſs of Her Majeſty's being on the *Throne*, under *whom*

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we *enjoy* all the desirable Fruits of a Blessed *Peace* at home, and a Successful *War* abroad.

Shall we look on all these Matters with a careless Eye, and be unconcern'd at the great Things God has done for us, and yet by a mighty Hand to the shame and confusion of the *Grand Enemy* of us and all Christendom?

Let not the *Arm* of Flesh claim all the *Honour* of these Deliverances, nor the whole be ascrib'd *to second* Causes, or the ill *Management* of our Adversaries.

Far be it from me to *derogate* from the Honour of those Noble *Instruments* that are employ'd; yet still there is somewhat *so singular* in our Affairs, that we can do no less than *acknowledge* God's Hand therein.

Every lesser *Accident*, or ordinary *Occurrence*, every smaller or inconsiderable *Benefit* or *Mischief*, to call these by the Name of *Special Providences or Judgments* is no way convenient.

But when *Accidents* fall out very *important* and seasonable, very *conducive* to the Prosperity of a Nation, the contrary whereof would have been *destructive* to Peace and Religion. When such Accidents fall out, 'tis but *just to ascribe* them to the Almighty, it is but Duty *to acknowledge* them as Especial Instances of the Divine Love, it is *but reasonable to own* them as *the Acts* of a most Gracious Providence.

And such *doubtless* have been the *Great Successes* which has attended Her Majesty's Reign.

They have been of *Unspeakable Advantage* to our Church and State. They have fall'n out *answerable* to the Prayers and Desires of all good Men. There has been an harmonious *Conspiracy* of various Accidents to the same good end and effect.

Great Things have been done for the *Maintenance* of Right, *Vindication* of Innocence, and the *Support* of our own

own Rights, as well as for the *Preservation* of the *Liberties* of others.

And the *Justice* and Righteousness of our Cause, has the more entitled us to God's Blessing, which is not *a boundless Ambition*, which of all Vices is the worst, for other Vices Corrupt, but this endeavours to *confound* the whole World. Not a false Notion *of Honour* bounded by no Principles that are just and good: Not *a Desire* to inrich our selves at *the Expence* of the Miseries of others: Not an insatiable *Appetite* to aggrandize our Nation, by the *Oppression* of our Neighbours: Not a *delight in* War and Bloodshed, and the doing of mischief for mischief sake:

But *a generous* Attempt to fix the *Ballance* of Power more equally, and to assert the *common Liberties* of Christendom, and a *noble Design* to secure the *Peace and Quiet* of our innocent Neighbours, and to set *bounds*, with God's Permission, to that *exorbitant Power* which has been too too long so troublesome to *Europe*.

In *so just and righteous a Cause* as ours is, we may comfortably hope for God's Blessing, for he *is a Judge* of Right, a *Guardian* of Innocence, and an *Enemy* to all Oppression.

And Blessed be the glorious Name of God for all these wonderful *Experiences* of his Mercy in the happy Conduct of our publick Affairs, whereby it appears, that *the hand of the Lord has been towards his Servants, and his Indignation towards his Enemies*. Isa. 66. 14.

And thus I have pass'd thro' all the Method I proposed, and it only remains that I make ready to dismiss you with some practical *Inferences*.

Infer. 1. What reason Mankind has to bless and praise God that they are under the Care of a kind and watchful Providence.

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Τίμοι ξῶν ἐν Κόσμῳ, θεῶν ἢ προνοίας κενῷ.

It was a noble Saying of *Marcus Antoninus*, Who would desire to live in a World *void* of God and Providence? What *a ſad Scene of* Affairs muſt we lye under, if we *baniſh* God and his Providence from the World? for with that we *baniſh* all Joy, Peace and Comfort for ever.

What *Melancholly Apprehenſions* muſt it cauſe in us, to ſuppoſe that no care is taken of human Affairs, but that we all ſail in the tempeſtuous Sea of this World, every Minute in danger of Rocks and Sands, *without a Pilot to ſteer us.*

Good God! What would then become of *Order* and *Government?* and what would be the *Lot* of the *meek*, the *quiet*, and the *harmleſs* Man?

There would be a *large Field* for powerful Sinners, the *Leviathans* of the Age to take their Paſtime therein.

Shall then all Civil Affairs be left to *the diſcretion* of Mankind to ſhuffle and cut and divide the World as they pleaſe?

No ſurely, it were as good to be ſubject to *chance or fate*, as to *the Will of Man*, not guided by *Law* nor *Reaſon*, nor *reſtrained* by God and his Providence.

For if we conſider how Men ſometimes *uſe* their *Reaſons* and their *Power* too, this would put us all under the *Arbitrary Yoke* of our own kind, and make all our Lives *uncomfortable.*

But bleſſed be God, who is *a lover* of Mankind, who *ſupports* good and *reſtrains* bad Men, who is a *Friend* to human Societies, and *preſerves* Order, and *upholds* Authority, and makes all things work *together for good to them* that fear God.

Rom. 8. 28.

Inf. 2. A full perſwaſion there is a God and a Providence, will bring much *eaſe* to the Minds of Men in reſpect both of publick and private Matters.

If

If things *go well*, the good Man has *abundant* reason to be satisfied, but *if not*, he *poſſeſſeth* his Soul with *patience*, as ſtill believing that all is *over-rul'd* by a wiſe Providence.

It is the *property* of a good Man to kiſs and embrace all the *Iſſues* of the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, and therefore with him all *Events* are either *good* in *themſelves*, or in *their ends* and Iſſues.

Too *much uneaſyneſs* under the *preſent*, and too *ſollicitous* enquiries for *the future*, are *Evils* that *are planted* by *Curioſity*, *watered* by a great *diſguſt* of things *before* us, and receive *encreaſe* from diſtruſtful *fears* of what will be *hereafter*.

Againſt all which *Plagues* of the Mind, a *Quick* and *Active Perſwaſion*, that the *moſt High Rules in the Kingdoms of Men*, and his Wiſdom preſides in all the World, is an eaſy and perfect *Antidote*. Dan. 4. 17.

Inf. 3. Since God's Providence is ſo neceſſary and ſo uſeful in the World, does it not behove us to conſider by what Ways and Means we may ſecure it to us and ours, and ſo be intitled to his Care and Love.

And this will be beſt done:

1. By Piety to God.

2. By Obedience to Government.

3. Charity to all Men.

1. *By Piety to God.*

This

This is neceſſary in the firſt Place; for if we are fit for Good, Good will come; and if we are worthy of Proſperity, we ſhall Flouriſh.

All the Ways of God are Juſt and Equal, and Good or Evil are Meaſured to Mankind, according to their Deſerts. The Vices of the People have an ill Influence on the Community, and if they be not amended, will haſten its Ruine.

We are in a Querulous Age, and too many are apt to complain the Times are Evil, but 'tis the Men in it are ſo: Let every one mend One, and all will be well. Such an univerſal Reformation will be the beſt means to ſecure us the Protection of God, for *Righteouſneſs exalts a Nation, but Sin is the Evil and Reproach of any People.*

Prov. 14. 34.

2. *By Obedience to Government.*

For a juſt Obedience to our Lawful Prince, is Part of our Duty towards God.

Now if any Queſtion ariſe, Who is that Lawful Prince? the beſt Anſwer is, They that are over us by the Laws of the Land, are over us in the Lord.

As our Church exacts not of Her Members a Blind or Implicite Faith, ſo does She no where require a Blind or Implicite Obedience; The Word of God is our Rule for the One, the Law of the Land is our Rule for the Other.

Some unhappy Perſons have advanced ſuch Principles of Government, as ſeem Calculated for the Meridian of Tyranny; by which they require ſuch Obedience from the Subject, as ſtrips him of all Benefit by the Law, and opens a Door for Slavery. But if theſe Men would be

pleaſed

pleased to consider the horrid Effects of Arbitrary Power Abroad, they might soon be convinc'd of their Error, and be brought to Acknowledge,

That all Government is from God, who is Good, and so designed by God to do good to Mankind, to Protect the Innocent, and further the Tranquility of the World.

And such is her Majesty's Present Government, which is so well suited to the Interests of all Good Men, and to which God has more than once given Testimony by his special Providence.

What remains then, but that we all entirely Acquiesce under so Gracious and so Good a Power, and as it is our Duty, *be Subject to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake.* 1 Pet. 2.

3. *Charity to all Men.*

This is a Duty strictly requir'd by our common Christianity, and when truly Answered, will Endear us all to the Providence of God.

For Christianity is a kind, a gentle, a well-natur'd Institution, and is wholly made up of Peace and Love.

It becomes us all to have honourable Thoughts of our own Church, and to be thankful to God for *the Means of Salvation* we there Enjoy, for doubtless She is *the best Constituted Part of* the Catholick Church this Day in the World.

But then our Zeal for this Communion need not Eat up all our Charity to *other Orthodox* Protestants, whether at Home or Abroad; It being the worst kind of Inclosure to entail *Salvation* to a Party, and that which our

our *most Learned Writers* have justly tax'd the *Papists* for, as *Cruel* and *Uncharitable*.

Must then all that are without U S, be like *the Mountains of* Gilboa, upon which no Dews, no Drops of Rain, no Showers of Grace must fall, and with the *barren Fig-tree* be Smitten with a *perpetual Curse?*

How far *gentleness* and good Usage Influences Mankind, is well known to all considering Men, and if we would make the Tryal, I doubt not, but a Wise and Discreet *Charity* will never be lost upon a good Person.

It has not seemed fit to *the Wisdom of the State* to trust any Party of Men with a Power to Oppress others, and possibly this is for all *our Good*, as leaving room only for all Parties to *Outvie each other* in generous Acts of Charity.

Let us then of the Church begin first, and then we may hope that they which *receive* no hurt, will *do* none, but if they should make unfair Returns *of Evil for our Good Will*, the Fault is entirely theirs, and will be *plac'd* by all Men to *Their Accounts*, and we shall have the Praise of Acting upon that *Noble Principle of Overcoming Evil with Good*.

Psalm. 109: 4.

Rom. 12. 21.

Let busy and *unthinking* Men Censure such *Charity* as want of *Zeal* and Carnal *Wisdom*; Mens Tongues and Pens are their own, and Men of Heat and Passion will evaporate their Follies, tho' it be to the disturbance of the Church of God; it is enough for us, that we have the *Comfort* of having done our Duty, and endeavoured by *Well doing* to *put to Silence the* Ignorance of Foolish Men.

1 Pet. 2. 15

Must

Must the World for ever be Divided, and Societies Disturb'd, and Government Weakned, and the Minds of Men be Distracted with the Uncertain Opinions of Men? Certainly there is a Way, if not to Cure, yet to alleviate this Evil.

It is indeed desireable that all the *Controversies* of the Church could be entirely *compos'd*, for then we should have but one *Division* amongst us, *viz.* all *good Men* would be of one way, and all *bad Men* of another.

But possibly this is not to be expected in this Corruption and Degeneracy of *Christendom*; and since S. *Paul* has said, *There must be Heresies, that they which are approved may be made Manifest*: Let us by no means Aggravate our *Calamity*, but try if there be not a way left, either to *Correct*, or at least to *Mitigate* this Misfortune. 1 Cor. 11. 19.

Several have been the *Contrivances of Men* for the Peace of the Church, and if you will believe *the Church of* Rome, it can only be done by *submission to an Infallible Guide*: But the World has had *enough* of her Policies, and finds that all the Peace She procures to the Church, is the Effect *of Force and Severity*, and notwithstanding this Infallible Guide, She is her Self *Infallibly and Infinitely deceived*.

In other Places, the Way of *Authority* has been made use of in a lower Degree; but neither has this been able to Compose these Breaches in the Church of God.

There is one way left, and that is the way *of Charity and Love*, of Gentleness and Moderation; and for this way, *which looks like the way of God*, there is much to be said from the Frame and Temper, the Spirit and Genious of the *Christian Religion*, which was sent into the World

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to soften the *Roughness of Human Nature*, by the most tender Principles of Charity and mutual Forbearances, and *to unite* the whole World upon the bottom of the sincerest Love. Alas! There's *a cloud* upon Mens Hearts that must first be remov'd, and too many *understand* only by *their Affections*, and unless you gain upon them that way, there's no *Access* to Cure them of their *Errors*, and all your Reasoning is but *thrown* away upon them.

Whilst Men are *prejudic'd*, all we can say is to no purpose; but if by *gentle* ways and *proper* acts of *Charity* you win upon them, and induce them to think *favourably* of you, then will their Passions cool, and all their Prejudices cease, and so the *Door open'd for Information*.

All Men are not capable *of wise Discourses*, and as some Men are not, so others *will not* be at leisure to hear and weigh your Arguments; but by gaining upon the *Affections* of either of them, you are in the *fairest way for* their Conviction: For possibly, in this humoursome and unreasonable Age, where Men are bred up in the Interest of *Parties*, and accept that for Truth, which their *Leaders*, and sometimes *Themselves*, like best, it will be found by *Experience*, that *Charity is a better* composer of *Controversies*, than either *Authority* or *Infallibility*.

To Conclude: Let it never be said that any true Churchman is wanting in this noble Principle of Charity. This is what we have often boasted of, and what we have admir'd in great Men of other Communions, *viz. Erasmus, Melancthon, Fr. Paul, Cassander Thuanus, Grotius*, &c. All which are still most *Venerable* Names with *Learned* Men, and yet 'tis well known they were all Eminent for *Moderation*.

In

In a word, if the good Spirit of God be our Teacher, it will make us all Humble and Charitable, and ſilence our Heats and Paſſions, eſpecially *about ſuch things* as are at a great and wide diſtance from the *Foundation* of Faith; and by it we ſhall have fewer *Diſputes* about Religion, but more *of true Piety* in the World: And then God will Bleſs us, and delight to do us good, and Protect our Church and State againſt all our Enemies. All which we beg of God, who is Charity and Love it ſelf, and that for the Sake of the Holy Jeſus, who in an exceſs of Charity, and at the expence of his own Blood, was graciouſly pleas'd to be our Common Redeemer; To whom with the Eternal Spirit, Three Perſons and One God, be aſcribed, as moſt due, all Honour and Glory both now and evermore. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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In a word, if the good Spirit of God be our Teacher, it will make us all Humble and Charitable, and, ſilence our Hearts and Paſſions, eſpecially about Such things as are at a great and wide diſtance from the Foundation of Faith; and by it we ſhall have fewer Diſputes about Religion, but more of true Piety in the World: And then God will Bleſs us, and delight to do us good, and Protect our Church and State againſt all our Enemies. All which we beg of God, who is Charity and Love it ſelf, and that for the Sake of the Holy Jeſus, who in an excels of Charity, and at the expence of his own Blood, was graciouſly pleas'd to be our Common Redeemer; To whom with the Eternal Spirit, Three Perſons and One God, be aſcribed, as moſt due, all Honour and Glory both now and evermore. Amen.

FINIS.